

This I Believe

Ng Zhi Xuan (23)

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“Everything we hear is an opinion, not a fact. Everything we see is a perspective, not the truth.” This is my belief. Indeed, what the noble ones say may not be the ultimate reality, what we deduce may differ from the others, for there are two sides to a coin. Therefore, instead of constantly pursuing Confucius’ beliefs, I believe that seeking a personal perspective and an individual voice should be one’s lifelong goal. It is only through this that we can be the torchbearer of our life and light up our future path ahead.

A few years ago, my primary school English teacher imparted her knowledge of foreigners to us during lessons. Here’s what she said, “Americans are very liberal, open-minded and straight-forward. On the contrary, the Chinese from China are conservative yet pretentious, sometimes stabbing you from the back without you noticing.” As an innocent child, I gladly accepted her interpretation of the east and the west. However, when I told my mom what I had learnt in school, I received an unexpected rebuke.

“As a learner, you should discern an opinion from a fact. What your teacher said is merely her opinion.” She then went on introducing one of her many friends from China who had been a generous friend to her. At that moment, her “lecture” made sense to me. It was then a new concept waiting to be taken up, however, it has now evolved into my lifelong belief.

In subsequent years to come by, I experienced several incidents where my belief had been constantly tested. However, only one particular occasion left me feeling proud even until now.

Last year, there was a sudden craze of Korean boy band in my class. It was often not unusual for the whole class to hold a debate on which Korean bands were the “best”. Since I had never heard of the names “SHINee” or “BEAST” in my whole life until they brought it up, I felt aberrant and isolated. It was as if I had been thrown onto a deserted island with deep sea boundary all around, separating me from my classmates.

Should I pick up a Korean band to worship? Should I buy the Korean pop albums? Doubts pervaded my mind for days, haunting me even in my sleep. Just as the darkness of insecurity was about to engulf me, I saw a glimmer of light at the far end of the tunnel. That was my belief. It told me that I was uninterested in Korean pop and that I should not drift along the tide. I heeded its advice to ignore the craze. Eventually, nothing went wrong and my relationship with the class sailed smooth.

Confucius, Mencius and Asoka, they all had different beliefs and interpretations of the world, leading each to his success. As sentient beings, I believe everyone will have the ability to do so.